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FM AMEMBASSY CHISINAU

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8275

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000627

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Non-Communist Parties Unite; Now the
Harder Part Starts

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Accordingly.

REF: A. Chisinau 604; B. Chisinau 586

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The four non-Communist parties, who were elected to a combined parliamentary majority of 53 out of 101 seats on July 29, formed an official Alliance for European Integration on August 8. If, as is increasingly being predicted, the Party of Communists (PCRM) "designates" eight MPs to vote with the non-Communists, the Parliament will be able to elect a President. At that point, the former opposition will face three challenges: translating their general principles into policy; governing Moldova through the global economic crisis; and avoiding a repetition of the disunity and squabbling that characterized previous coalitions in the 1990s. End summary.

Four Players and Their Program

¶2. (SBU) After 10 days of negotiations, the four non-Communist parties announced a coalition based on 21 principles, of which the five most prominent, and predictable are: reestablishing the rule of law; overcoming the economic crisis and ensuring economic growth; boosting local autonomy; reintegration of Transnistria into Moldova; and European integration, along with a consistent and balanced foreign policy. Democratic Party leader Marian Lupu explained that the Alliance's foreign policy consisted of European integration; resuming good relations with Moldova's neighbors Romania and Ukraine; and a functional partnership with Moldova's strategic partner Russia. This blend of policies satisfies the Romania-leaning liberal parties, and acknowledges the necessity of cooperating with Russia. In a Pro-TV talk show discussion program on August 8, the four leaders promised that their first foreign-policy action would be to lift the visa regime imposed on Romanian citizens by the PCRM government. This step should go a long way towards improving relations both with Romania and with the European Union. The Alliance also promised that it would engage in a dialogue with the PCRM, after Voronin returns April 15 from his one-week holiday in Turkey -- but said it would not negotiate with the Communists about the division of cabinet jobs.

¶3. (SBU) The four parties signing on to the Alliance for European Integration are:

--The Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM, 18 seats), led by the pragmatic Vlad Filat, and boasting of three more seats in comparison to the April 5 vote;

--The Liberal Party (PL, 15 seats), led by the intransigently anti-communist Mihai Ghimpu, and his nephew, Chisinau Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca, with the same number of seats as after April 5;

--The Democratic Party (PDM, 13 seats), led by the former Speaker and PCRM defector Marian Lupu, up from no seats after April 5, when it was under the management of Dumitru Diacov; and

--The Our Moldova Alliance (AMN, 7 seats), led by former Chisinau Mayor Serafim Urechean, and down from 11 seats after April 5.

Getting to Three-Fifths and Breaking the Impasse

14. (SBU) Having a majority in parliament will allow election of a Speaker, but, as ref A notes, Voronin will remain Acting President until 61 MPs vote otherwise. Only then would the Alliance be able to put into practice whatever deals they may have made regarding the distribution of offices. Therefore, eight PCRM MPs, whoever they are and however they are won, pulled or pushed across the aisle, must vote for the coalition candidate. This might look difficult, considering that the Alliance will want someone prominent from its own

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side to be President: in an August 10 interview with Radio Free Europe, PD member and former Minister of Economy Valeriu Lazar, with the agreement of the Alliance leaders, rejected the bland-technocrat formula and stated that Moldova's next President would not be "colorless, odorless, or tasteless." A corresponding difficulty is that Voronin continues to denigrate his opponents in the language he used in the polarized, mud-slinging campaign (ref B) just ended. In a July 30 press conference, he stated that his opponents were "bound to outside forces, primarily various Romanian forces and other structures, including corrupt and criminal international structures."

Getting to "Da"

15. (SBU) Beyond the electoral exhaustion felt by many Moldovans and the crying need for a functioning government to deal with a sea of troubles, several factors may be pushing Voronin and the PCRM to hand over the eight votes needed to elect a president. First, the PCRM may be willing to concede the spoils to the victor -- a move that could be portrayed as generous, and which would prevent a third round of national elections following failure to elect a president. Such a move might also be a form of self-protection, since the general trend in the PCRM vote-share has been downwards, and might continue in a third round seen by many as caused by PCRM stubbornness. In a recent interview with a Ukrainian newspaper, PCRM MP Vladimir Turcan, who was Deputy Speaker in the Parliament elected April 5, signaled that the party was ready to concede eight votes to elect a "politically non-affiliated President."

Comment

16. (SBU) Turcan's position could be merely a negotiating move, one that the PCRM would be able to give up, graciously and as a good loser, to allow Lupu or Filat to become President. As the PCRM is well aware, the ongoing train wreck that is the Moldovan economy is only going to get worse. There could therefore be a real advantage in ceding the presidency to a prominent target, and rebuilding the PCRM's fortunes while commenting, more in sorrow than in anger, that pensions are not being paid and that the stability established under the PCRM is breaking down.

CHAUDHRY